

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the present application in view of the foregoing amendments and in view of the reasons that follow.

Claims 1, 21 and 22 have been amended. Support for this amendment can be found at least in FIG. 8, FIG. 9A, FIG.9B and FIG.10, and the specification from page 22, line 23, to page 24, line 8. Claim 14 has been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 1-12 and 21-22 are pending.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-7, 11, 12, 21 and 22 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,549,657 to Ohta (“Ohta”) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,631,207 to Hirota (“Hirota”). Claims 8-10 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ohta and Hirota in view of U.S. Patent Publication No. 2001/0013953 to Uekusa et al. (“Uekusa”). Claim 14 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ohta and Hirota in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,875,036 to Sasanuma (“Sasanuma”). Insofar as these rejections can be applied to the claims as amended, Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections for at least the following reasons.

Independent claim 1 recites “wherein the image data generating means has a background density averaging section and a character density averaging section, where the first image data is color image data comprising plural color components and where at least one color component is associated with a character or a line figure, the image data generating means generates second image data by replacing the first image data other than said at least one color component with data outputted from the background density averaging section, and by replacing the first image data of said at least one color component with data outputted from the character density averaging section.” A non-limiting example of these recited features in claim 1 can be found in Figure 8, 9A, 9B and 10, and the specification on page 22,

line 23, to page 24, line 8, which discloses the execution of an over-print or trapping process (see FIG. 9B) and a smoothing process (see FIG. 10). The references applied in the above rejection fail to disclose or suggest the specifically recited structure of claim 1 which executes a combination of an over-print and smoothing process in the manner recited in claim 1.

Independent claims 21 and 22 respectively recite “wherein the image data generating unit has a background density averaging section and a character density averaging section, where the first image data is color image data comprising plural color components and where at least one color component is associated with a character or a line figure, the image data generating unit generates second image data by replacing the first image data other than said at least one color component with data outputted from the background density averaging section, and by replacing the first image data of said at least one color component with data outputted from the character density averaging section” and “wherein the first image data is color image data comprising plural color components and where at least one color component is associated with a character or a line figure, the generating second image data comprises: generating average background density data of the first image data; generating average character density data of the first image data; and generating second image data by replacing the first image data other than said at least one color component with the average background density data, and by replacing the first image data of said at least one color component with the average character density data”, and thus are patentable for reasons analogous to claim 1.

The dependent claims are patentable for at least the same reasons as their respectively independent claims, as well as for further patentable features recited therein.

Applicants believe that the present application is now in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by a

check or credit card payment form being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicant hereby petitions for such extension under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 and authorizes payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 19-0741.

Respectfully submitted,

Date April 6, 2006

FOLEY & LARDNER LLP
Washington Harbour
3000 K Street, N.W., Suite 500
Washington, D.C. 20007-5143
Telephone: (202) 945-6162
Facsimile: (202) 672-5399

By Thomas G. Bilodeau

Pavan K. Agarwal
Attorney for Applicant
Registration No. 40,888

Thomas G. Bilodeau
Attorney for Applicant
Registration No. 43,438